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# X-FACTOR

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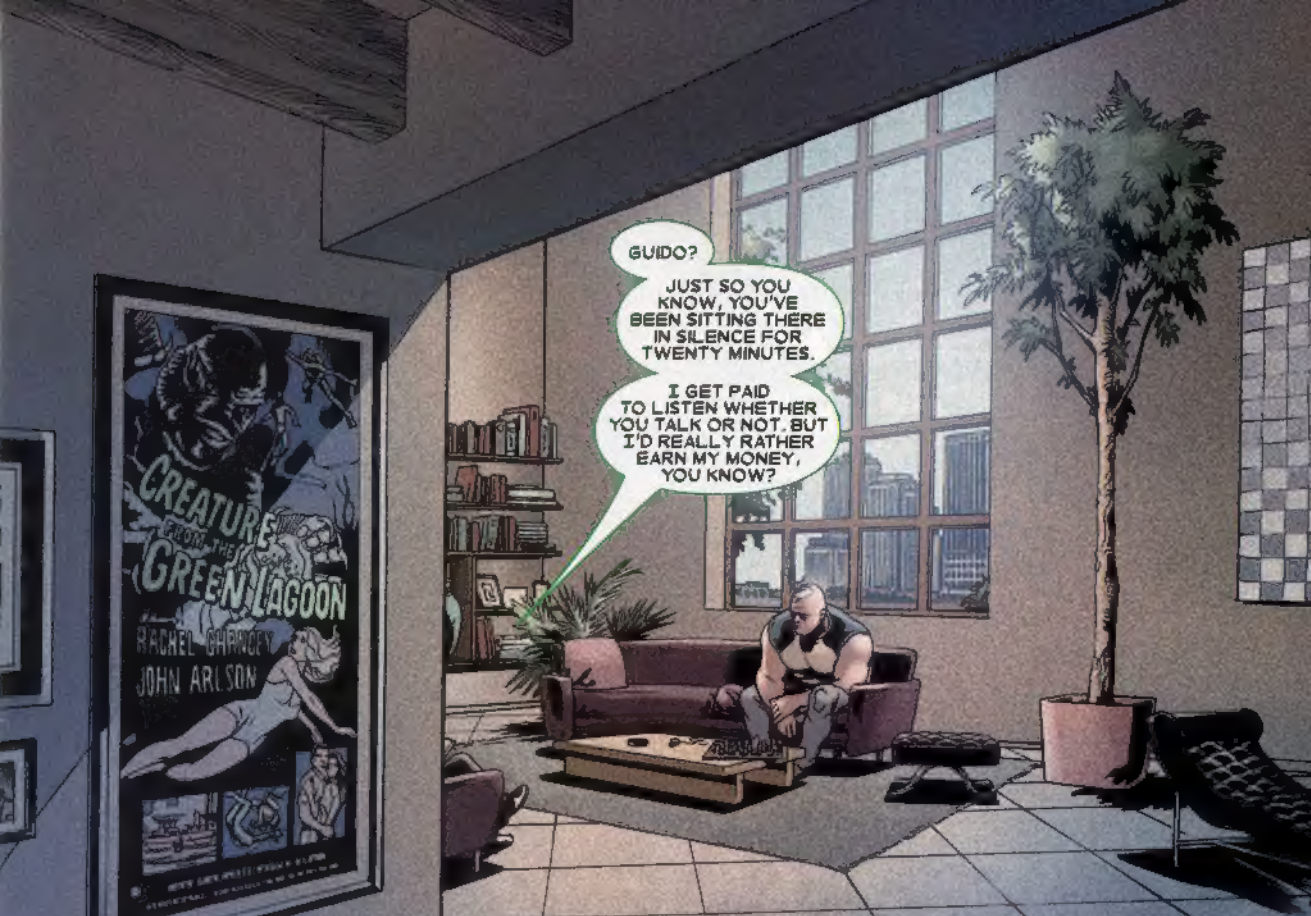


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DIRECT EDITION





GUIDO?

JUST SO YOU KNOW, YOU'VE BEEN SITTING THERE IN SILENCE FOR TWENTY MINUTES.

I GET PAID TO LISTEN WHETHER YOU TALK OR NOT, BUT I'D REALLY RATHER EARN MY MONEY, YOU KNOW?



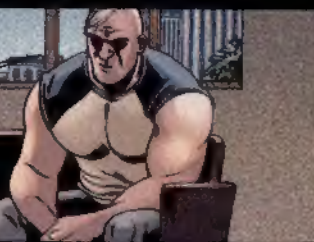
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LOOK... GUIDO...

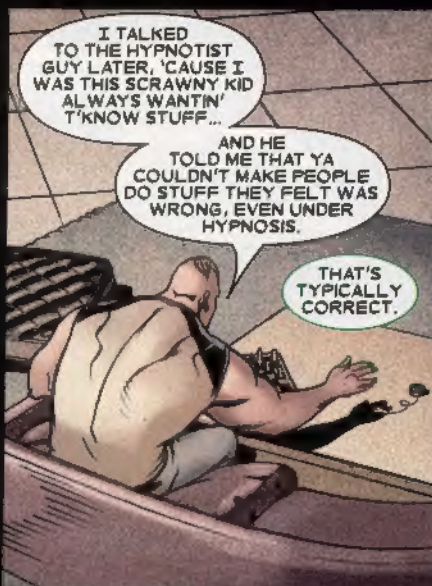
I... BEG YOUR PARDON?

HE CLUCKED LIKE A CHICKEN.

WHEN I WAS A KID, THIS HYPNOTIST PERFORMED AT TIMMY BEECHUM'S TENTH BIRTHDAY PARTY. AND HE PUT TIMMY UNDER AND HAD TIMMY CLUCKING LIKE A CHICKEN.



IT WAS HYSTERICAL. GIL SCHWEITZER WET HIMSELF, HE WAS LAUGHIN' SO HARD.



I TALKED TO THE HYPNOTIST GUY LATER, 'CAUSE I WAS THIS SCRAWNY KID ALWAYS WANTIN' T'KNOW STUFF...

AND HE TOLD ME THAT YA COULDN'T MAKE PEOPLE DO STUFF THEY FELT WAS WRONG, EVEN UNDER HYPNOSIS.

THAT'S TYPICALLY CORRECT.



I KILLED A GUY UNDER HYPNOSIS.

WUZZAT SAY ABOUT ME, HUH, DOC?



I COULDN'T  
STAND BEIN' IN PAIN  
ANYMORE. MY ALWAYS  
CRACKIN' WISE TO COVER  
UP MY...MY TWISTED  
UPPER BODY...HAS ME IN  
AGONY 24/7...THE JOKES  
JUST WEREN'T  
DOIN' IT.

SO I  
HEARD ABOUT  
THIS HYPNOTIST  
WHO COULD HELP  
ME. HE HELPED,  
AWRIGHT...

HELPED  
ME BECOME A  
SLEEPER AGENT FER  
SINGULARITY  
INVESTIGATIONS.

HELPED  
TURN ME INTO A  
COLD-BLOODED  
MURDERER.

'CEPT...

FEP!

IF I DIDN'T  
ALREADY HAVE  
IT IN ME TO BE A  
MURDERER...

HOW'D HE  
DO THAT TIME,  
HUH?

DID HE TURN  
ME INTO SOMETHIN'  
I'M NOT? OR JUST  
LET OUT WHAT I  
REALLY--

FEP!

SNAP!

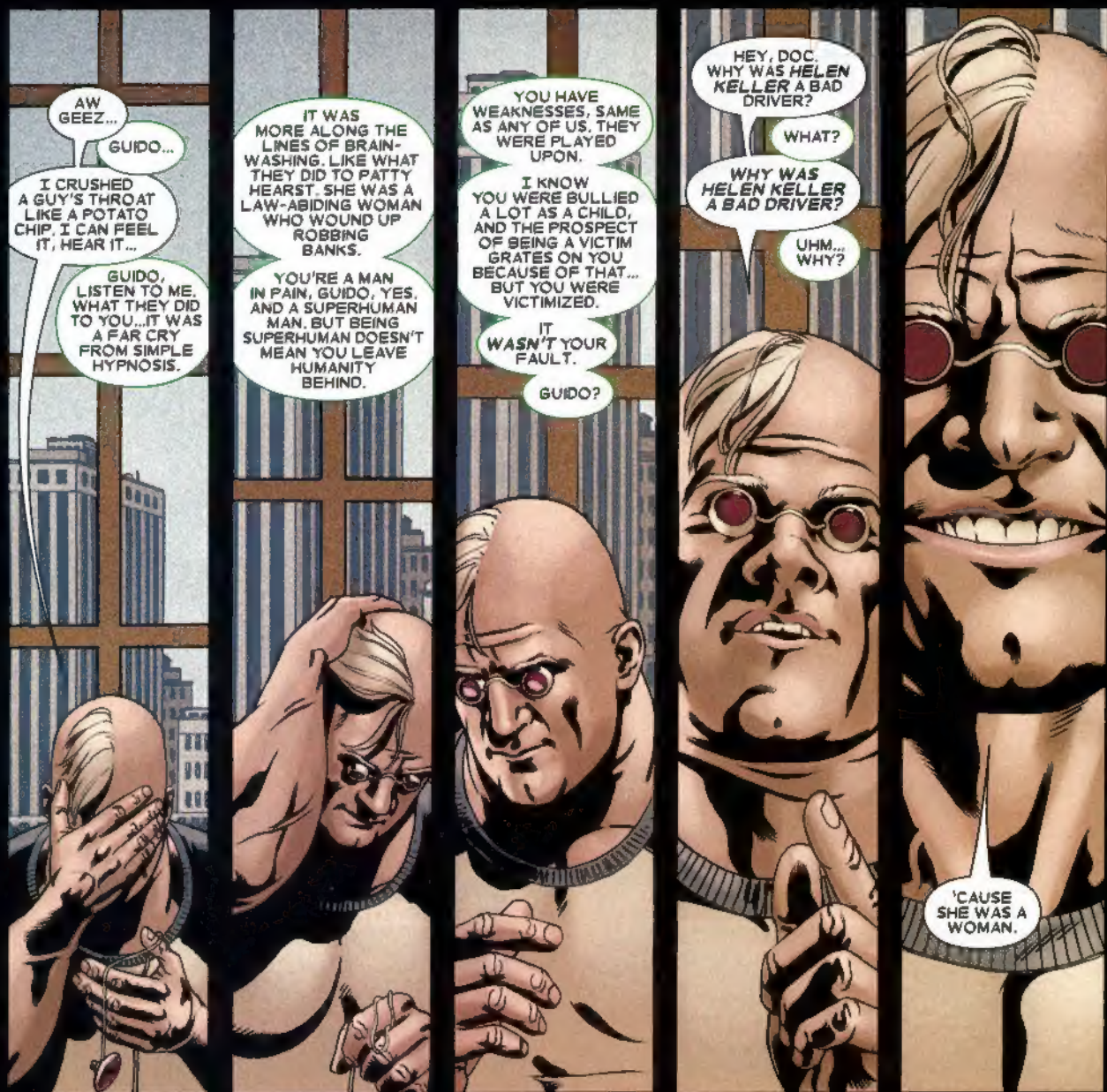
NUTS!

AW, THAT'S  
JUST PERFECT!  
OF ALL THE--

CHEAP  
PIECE'O CRAP!  
I JUST BOUGHT  
IT! I--

THUMP





AW  
GEEZ...  
GUIDO...

I CRUSHED  
A GUY'S THROAT  
LIKE A POTATO  
CHIP. I CAN FEEL  
IT, HEAR IT...

GUIDO,  
LISTEN TO ME.  
WHAT THEY DID  
TO YOU...IT WAS  
A FAR CRY  
FROM SIMPLE  
HYPNOSIS.

IT WAS  
MORE ALONG THE  
LINES OF BRAIN-  
WASHING. LIKE WHAT  
THEY DID TO PATTY  
HEARST. SHE WAS A  
LAW-ABIDING WOMAN  
WHO WOUND UP  
ROBBING  
BANKS.

YOU'RE A MAN  
IN PAIN, GUIDO. YES.  
AND A SUPERHUMAN  
MAN. BUT BEING  
SUPERHUMAN DOESN'T  
MEAN YOU LEAVE  
HUMANITY  
BEHIND.

YOU HAVE  
WEAKNESSES, SAME  
AS ANY OF US. THEY  
WERE PLAYED  
UPON.

I KNOW  
YOU WERE BULLIED  
A LOT AS A CHILD,  
AND THE PROSPECT  
OF BEING A VICTIM  
GRATES ON YOU  
BECAUSE OF THAT...  
BUT YOU WERE  
VICTIMIZED.

IT  
WASN'T YOUR  
FAULT.

GUIDO?

HEY, DOC.  
WHY WAS HELEN  
KELLER A BAD  
DRIVER?

WHAT?

WHY WAS  
HELEN KELLER  
A BAD DRIVER?

UHM...  
WHY?

'CAUSE  
SHE WAS A  
WOMAN.



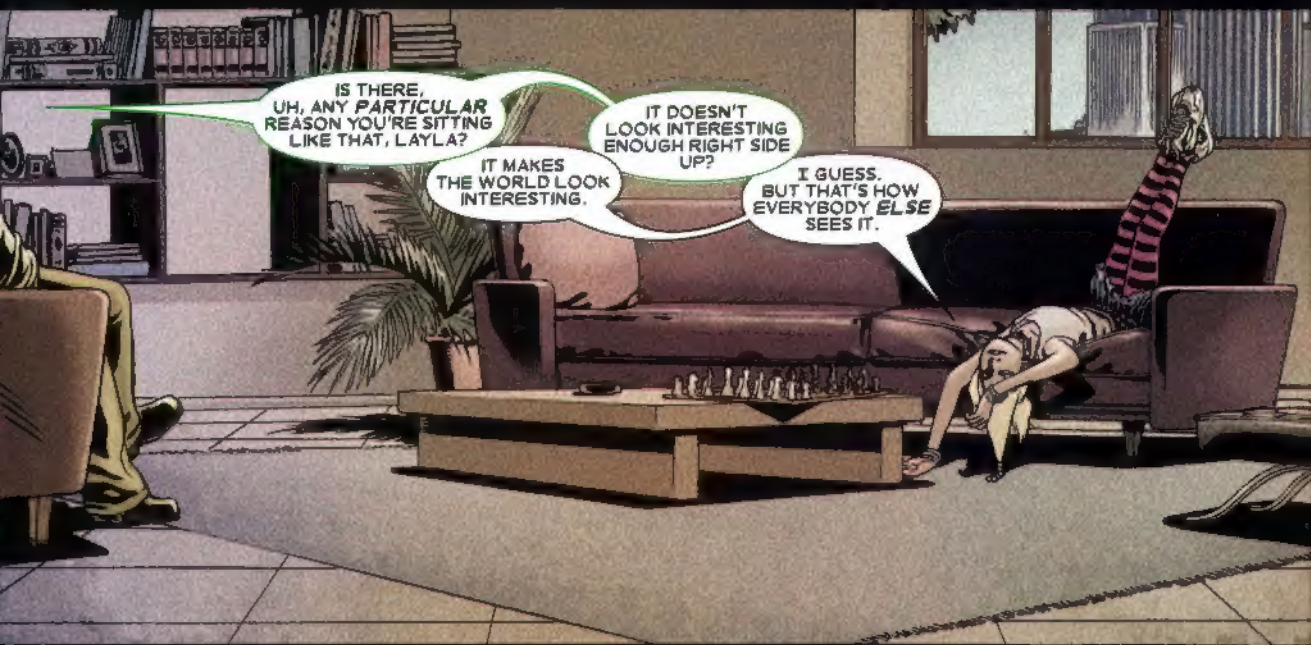
AH.  
"ALWAYS  
LEAVE 'EM  
LAUGHING,"  
EH?

GUESS  
THAT'S THE  
ONLY WAY  
TO LOOK  
AT IT.

# RE-X-AMINATIONS

PETER DAVID WRITER	PABLO RAIMONDI ART	BRIAN REBER COLORS	VC'S CORY PETT LETTERS	JOE QUESADA, DANNY MIKI, AND DAVE MCCAIG VARIANT COVER	SEAN RYAN ASSISTANT EDITOR	ANDY SCHMIDT EDITOR	JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF	DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER
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IS THERE, UH, ANY PARTICULAR REASON YOU'RE SITTING LIKE THAT, LAYLA?

IT MAKES THE WORLD LOOK INTERESTING.

IT DOESN'T LOOK INTERESTING ENOUGH RIGHT SIDE UP?

I GUESS, BUT THAT'S HOW EVERYBODY ELSE SEES IT.



THERE WAS THIS OLD EPISODE OF "STAR TREK" WHERE THE ENTERPRISE GOT HIT BY A ROMULAN SHIP.

AND TO SHOW IT WAS HURT, THEY HAD THE STARSHIP HANGING SIDEWAYS.

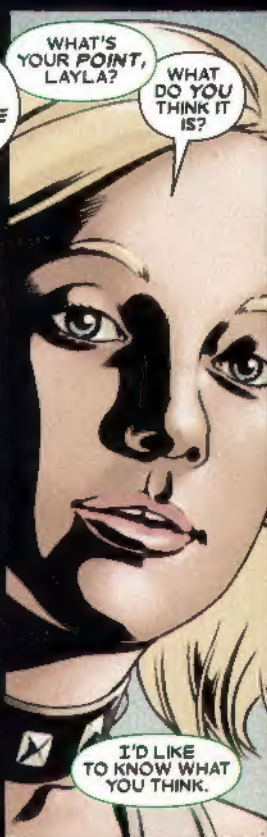
YOU KNOW WHY THAT WAS SILLY?

BECAUSE UP AND DOWN IS MEANINGLESS IN SPACE, EXCEPT IN RELATION TO A PLANETARY BODY.



RIGHT!

BUT IT WORKED ANYWAY 'CAUSE IT LOOKED SO DIFFERENT. IT WAS LIKE, "WHOA! THE ENTERPRISE IS LISTING! THEY'RE TAKING ON WATER!"



WHAT'S YOUR POINT, LAYLA?

WHAT DO YOU THINK IT IS?

I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK.



AND I'D LIKE TO KNOW WHAT YOU THINK, STALEMATE.

YOU PLAY?

OCCASIONALLY, YOU CARE TO--?

SURE.



SO YOU DID PSYCHIATRIC EVALUATIONS OF X-FACTOR BACK IN THE DAY, HUH?

THAT'S RIGHT.

WHAT DID YOU FIND?



YOU KNOW I CAN'T TELL YOU THAT.

BESIDES, WHY DO YOU NEED TO ASK? DON'T YOU KNOW?

IT'S WHAT YOU ALWAYS SAY, RIGHT? "I'M LAYLA MILLER. I KNOW STUFF."



I DO, BUT NOT EVERYTHING.

JUST THE FUTURE.

KINDA.

INTERESTING. THAT'S QUITE A BURDEN.



IT IS, BUT SOMETIMES, Y'KNOW, YOU HAVE TO MAKE SACRIFICES FOR THE GREATER GOOD.

AND HOW DO YOU KNOW THE FUTURE, MAY I ASK?



I SIT NAKED IN MY ROOM AT MIDNIGHT, SPEAK THE WORD "REVEAL" THREE TIMES, AND A SMALL TALKING BUTTERFLY APPEARS TO ME AND TELLS ME WHAT'S TO COME.



REALLY?



NO.





I WOULDN'T  
MAKE THAT MOVE.  
THAT'D PUT YOU  
IN CHECK.

NOPE.  
NOT THAT ONE  
EITHER.

AAAAAND  
THAT'S NO  
GOOD.



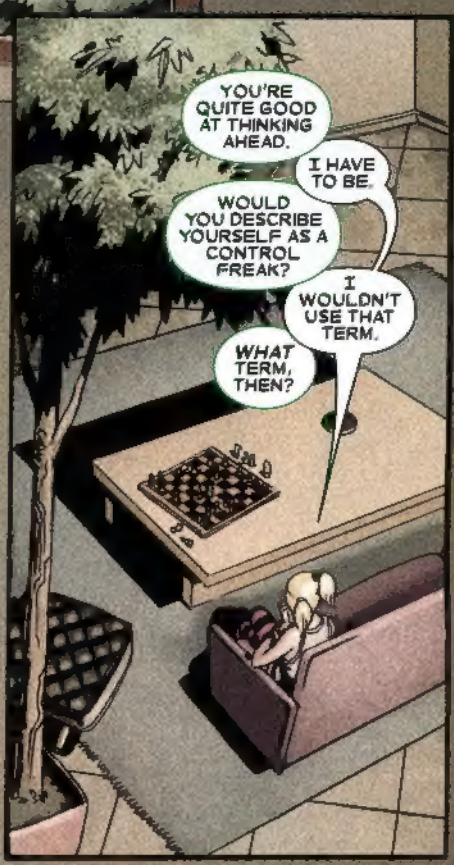
YOU'RE  
QUITE GOOD  
AT THINKING  
AHEAD.

I HAVE  
TO BE.

WOULD  
YOU DESCRIBE  
YOURSELF AS A  
CONTROL  
FREAK?

I  
WOULDN'T  
USE THAT  
TERM.

WHAT  
TERM,  
THEN?



LOOK,  
MAYBE WE  
SHOULD  
JUST--

HOW ABOUT  
IN CHESS TERMS?  
WHAT PIECE BEST  
REPRESENTS  
YOU?

PIECE?

THE KING?  
QUEEN?  
THE BISHOP?



THIS  
ONE.

A...  
PAWN?  
REALLY?

INTERESTING,  
CONSIDERING THAT'S  
THE MOST POWERLESS  
PIECE. HOW DO YOU  
SEE YOURSELF AS  
A PAWN?

BECAUSE I'M PART  
OF A DIFFERENT  
GAME THAN EVERY-  
BODY ELSE.

AND ONLY  
I CAN SEE THE  
PLAYERS. I KNOW  
THE ENDGAME.  
AND I KNOW...

...I'M  
EXPENDABLE.

BUT...HEY, IF  
A PAWN MAKES IT  
ACROSS THE BOARD,  
THEN SHE CAN BE  
TRANSFORMED INTO  
SOMETHING BETTER.  
SO HERE'S HOPING.  
HUH.



HERE'S  
HOPING.





SO...I SUPPOSE THE OBVIOUS QUESTION IS, HOW ARE YOU ADJUSTING TO LIFE WITHOUT POWERS, RIC?

WHY'RE YOU TALKING LIKE THAT?

LIKE WHAT?

LIKE WE'RE OLD FRIENDS OR SOMETHING. I DON'T KNOW YOU, YOU DUNNO ME, BUT YOU'RE CALLIN' ME "RIC."



WELL, I GENERALLY PREFER TO USE FIRST NAMES, AND "RCTOR" IS YOUR SURNAME. I CAN ADDRESS YOU AS "JULIO" IF YOU WISH. "J.E." IS ALSO A--

FORGET IT.

IF YOU REALLY WANT ME TO CALL YOU RCTOR...

I DON'T WANT YOU TO CALL ME NOTHING, OKAY?

WHY? DON'T YOU THINK YOU DESERVE A NAME?



WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

WELL, I--

WHAT THE HELL IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

LOOK, IF YOU'RE AFRAID TO ANSWER THE QUES--



"AFRAID?" I LIVED WITH MY FATHER BEING A FREAKIN' ARMS DEALER, "DOC." HE GOT KILLED, RIGHT IN FRONT OF ME, CLOSE AS YOU ARE NOW, WHEN I WAS SIX!

I FOUGHT SABRETOOTH! MAN, I FOUGHT DEATH! I'M TALKING THE ACTUAL HORSEMAN!

SCREW YOUR "AFRAID." WHAT MAKES YOU THINK SOME DUMB QUESTION SCARES ME?



BECAUSE YOU CAN'T WAVE YOUR HANDS AND SHAKE A QUESTION TO PIECES.

THEN AGAIN, YOU CAN'T DO THAT WITH ANYTHING ANYMORE, CAN YOU?

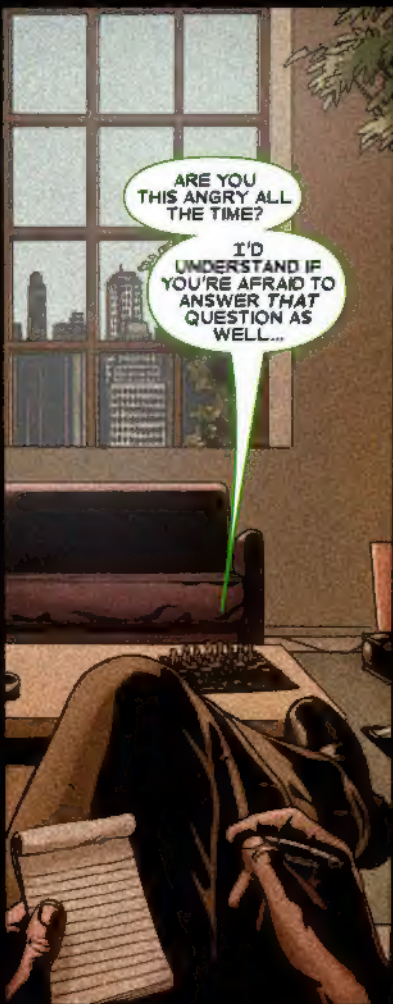




UP YOURS.

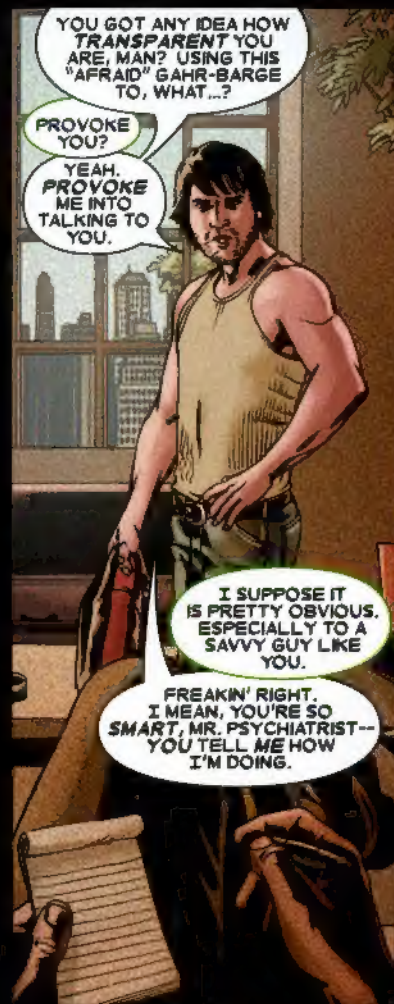
I'M ONLY HERE 'CAUSE MADROX TOLD US WE ALL HAD TO COME. SAID IT'D BE GOOD FOR US TO TALK THINGS OUT, AFTER ALL WE'D BEEN THROUGH.

BUT I'M DONE. I'M OUTTA HERE.



ARE YOU THIS ANGRY ALL THE TIME?

I'D UNDERSTAND IF YOU'RE AFRAID TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION AS WELL...



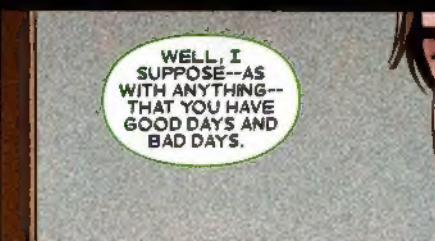
YOU GOT ANY IDEA HOW **TRANSPARENT** YOU ARE, MAN? USING THIS "AFRAID" GARR-BARGE TO, WHAT...?

PROVOKE YOU?

YEAH. **PROVOKE** ME INTO TALKING TO YOU.

I SUPPOSE IT IS PRETTY OBVIOUS, ESPECIALLY TO A SAVVY GUY LIKE YOU.

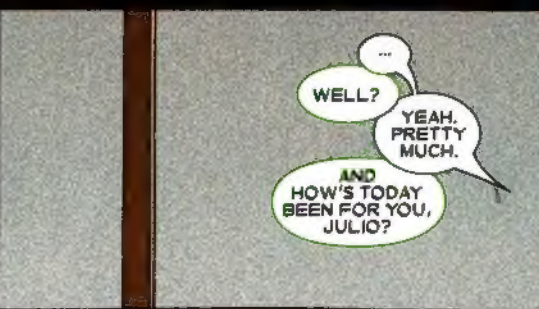
FREAKIN' RIGHT. I MEAN, YOU'RE SO SMART, MR. PSYCHIATRIST-- YOU TELL ME HOW I'M DOING.



WELL, I SUPPOSE--AS WITH ANYTHING-- THAT YOU HAVE GOOD DAYS AND BAD DAYS.



THE BAD DAYS ARE THE DAYS YOU WONDER "WHY ME?" AND THE GOOD DAYS ARE DAYS YOU'RE TOO BUSY TO WONDER THAT.



WELL?

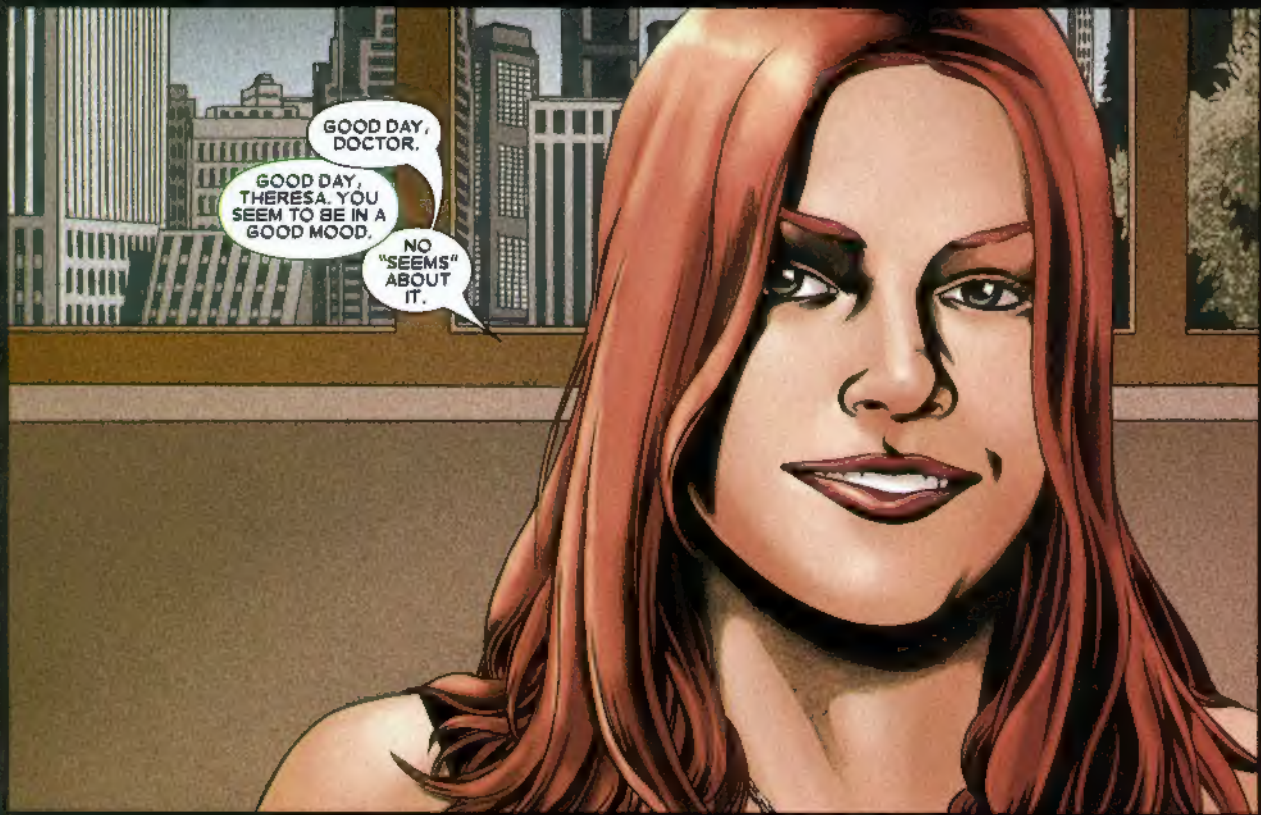
YEAH. PRETTY MUCH.

AND HOW'S TODAY BEEN FOR YOU, JULIO?



BAD DAY.





GOOD DAY,  
DOCTOR.

GOOD DAY,  
THERESA. YOU  
SEEM TO BE IN A  
GOOD MOOD.

NO  
"SEEMS"  
ABOUT  
IT.



WE TOOK  
A MORAL STAND ON  
THE REGISTRATION  
ACT, AND I'M PROUD  
OF THAT.

WE BEAT  
THE BAD GUYS,  
GOING UP AGAINST  
SINGULARITY  
INVESTIGATIONS.

AND I  
THINK THE TEAM'S  
REALLY COMING  
TOGETHER.

EVERYTHING'S  
GREAT.

WELL,  
THAT'S GOOD  
TO HEAR.



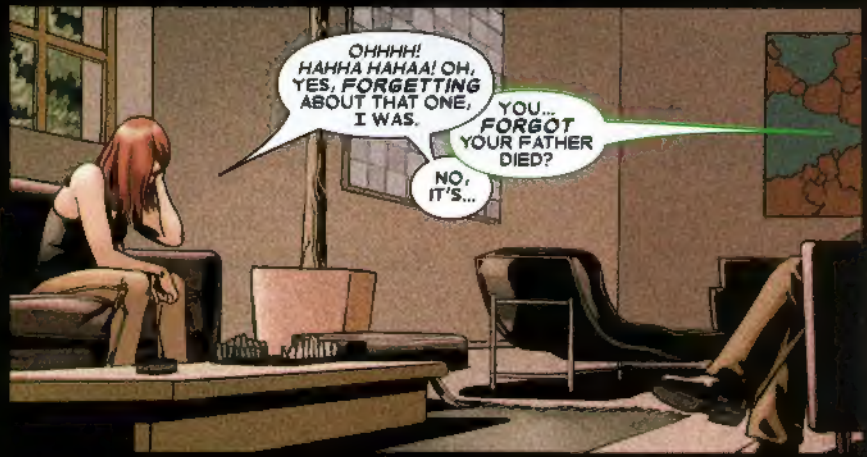
I'M REALLY  
NOT SURE WHAT'S  
EVEN LEFT TO  
TALK ABOUT!

IT CERTAINLY  
SOUNDS LIKE ALL  
THE BASES ARE  
COVERED.

I'M SORRY  
TO HEAR ABOUT  
YOUR FATHER, BY  
THE WAY. TRAGIC  
LOSS.



PARDON?

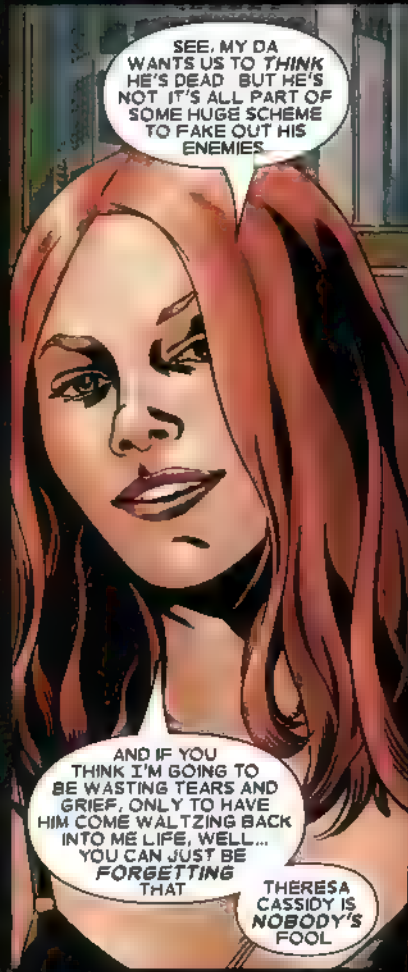


OH!!!  
HAHA HAHA! OH,  
YES, FORGETTING  
ABOUT THAT ONE,  
I WAS.

YOU...  
FORGOT  
YOUR FATHER  
DIED?

NO,  
IT'S...

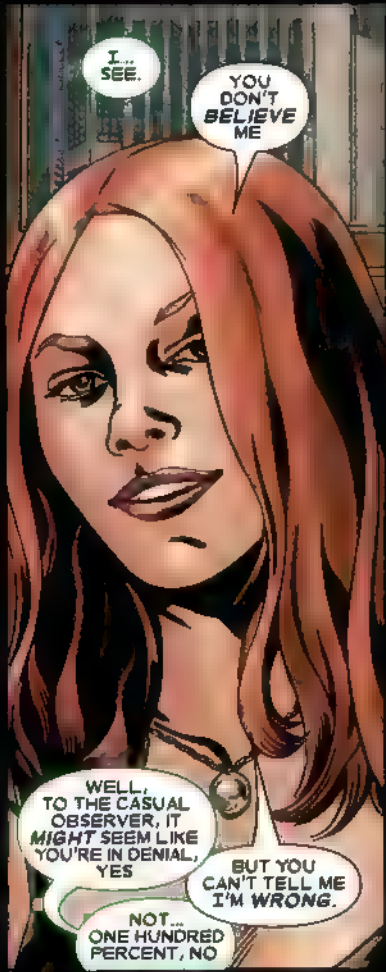




SEE, MY DA  
WANTS US TO *THINK*  
HE'S DEAD BUT HE'S  
NOT IT'S ALL PART OF  
SOME HUGE SCHEME  
TO FAKE OUT HIS  
ENEMIES.

AND IF YOU  
THINK I'M GOING TO  
BE WASTING TEARS AND  
GRIEF, ONLY TO HAVE  
HIM COME WALTZING BACK  
INTO ME LIFE, WELL...  
YOU CAN JUST BE  
*FORGETTING*  
THAT

THERESA  
CASSIDY IS  
NOBODY'S  
FOOL



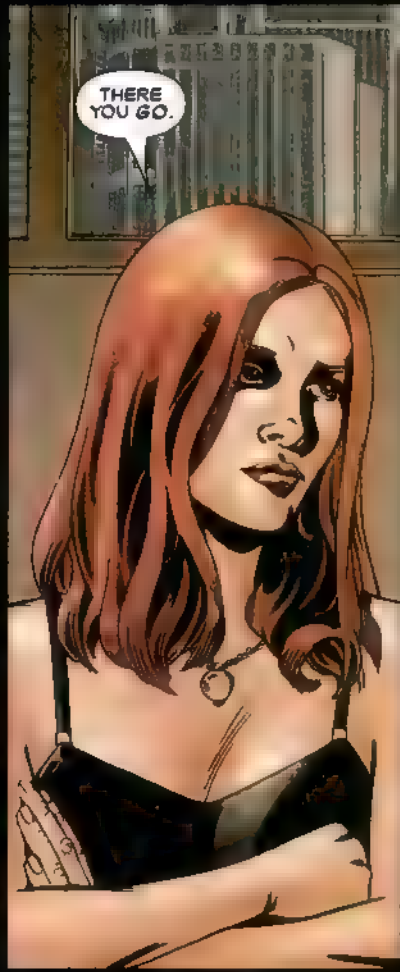
I...  
SEE.

YOU  
DON'T  
BELIEVE  
ME

WELL,  
TO THE CASUAL  
OBSERVER, IT  
MIGHT SEEM LIKE  
YOU'RE IN DENIAL,  
YES

BUT YOU  
CAN'T TELL ME  
I'M WRONG.

NOT...  
ONE HUNDRED  
PERCENT, NO



THERE  
YOU GO.



HAVE WE  
MUCH LONGER?  
I'VE GOT A HAIR  
APPOINTMENT  
SCHEDULED...

I UNDERSTAND  
YOU WERE SOMEWHAT  
BRUTALLY ATTACKED  
NOT LONG AGO.

HOW ARE  
YOU DEALING  
WITH THAT?



WHO  
TOLD YOU  
ABOUT  
THAT?

JAMIE?  
LAYLA?  
RICTOR?  
WHO?

IT  
DOESN'T  
MATTER

IT  
DOES TO  
ME. IT--



IT HAPPENED,  
ALL RIGHT? I'M  
DEALING WITH  
IT.

I'VE DEALT  
WITH FAR WORSE  
IN MY TIME

HAS IT MADE  
YOU WANT TO  
DRINK?

NO.

YOU SAID THAT  
AWFULLY FAST.  
LIKE YOU WERE  
EXPECTING IT





WELL, I'VE  
LEARNED TO TRY AND  
EXPECT **EVERYTHING**.  
SO I DON'T WIND UP TIED  
TO ANOTHER BLEEDING  
CHAIR WITH ANOTHER  
BLEEDING BALL GAG  
IN MY MOUTH, ALL  
RIGHT?

I'M SORRY.  
I'M SORRY AND  
I WAS IN SUCH A  
GOOD MOOD.

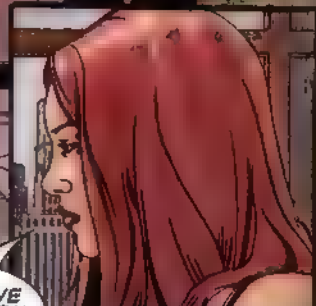
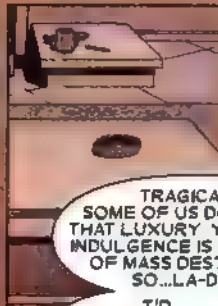
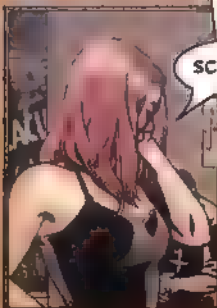
IT'S OKAY.  
THAT WAS GOOD  
GETTING UPSET  
IS GOOD

DO YOU  
EVER GET  
UPSET?

SURE, THERE  
ARE TIMES I GET  
SO UPSET, I JUST  
WANT TO--

SCREAM?

I  
SUPPOSE



TRAGICALLY,  
SOME OF US DON'T HAVE  
THAT LUXURY YOUR VOCAL  
INDULGENCE IS MY WEAPON  
OF MASS DESTRUCTION,  
SO...LA-DI-DAH

I'D  
RATHER FOCUS  
ON WHAT BRINGS ME  
HAPPINESS, THANK  
YOU EVER SO.

AND  
WHAT BRINGS  
YOU HAPPINESS  
THESE DAYS?

JUST  
BETWEEN  
US?

OF  
COURSE

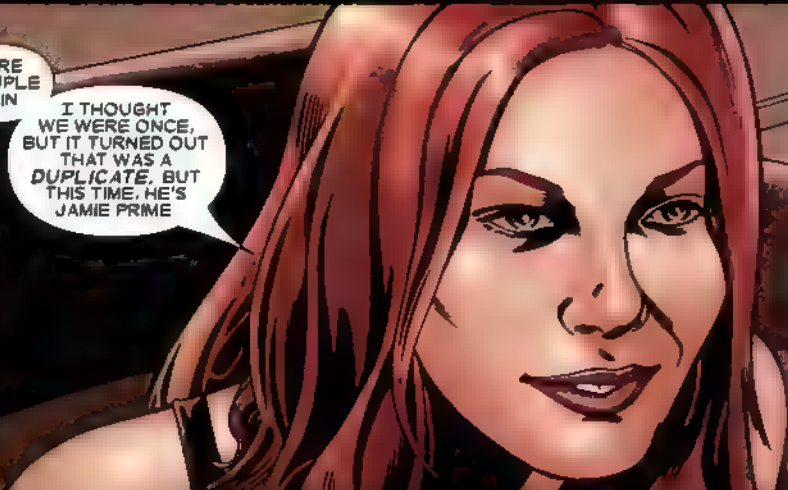
IT'S  
JAMIE.

WHAT'S  
JAMIE?



WE'RE  
A COUPLE  
AGAIN

I THOUGHT  
WE WERE ONCE,  
BUT IT TURNED OUT  
THAT WAS A  
DUPLICATE. BUT  
THIS TIME, HE'S  
JAMIE PRIME



AND  
I MEAN  
"PRIME"

I CAN'T  
WAIT FOR DA TO  
COME BACK FROM  
THE DEAD SO I  
CAN TELL HIM

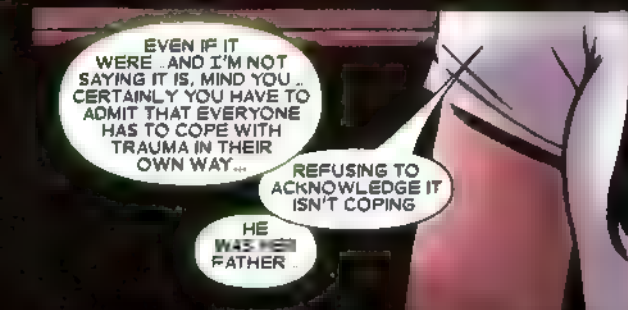




SO IS  
SIRYN STILL IN  
DENIAL OVER  
HER FATHER?

YOU KNOW  
I CAN'T DISCUSS  
THAT, MONET

SO  
THAT'S  
A "YES,"  
THEN.



EVEN IF IT  
WERE... AND I'M NOT  
SAYING IT IS, MIND YOU...  
CERTAINLY YOU HAVE TO  
ADMIT THAT EVERYONE  
HAS TO COPE WITH  
TRAUMA IN THEIR  
OWN WAY...

REFUSING TO  
ACKNOWLEDGE IT  
ISN'T COPING

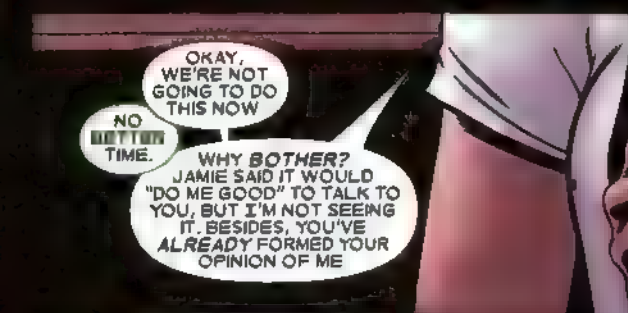
HE  
WAS ~~HER~~  
FATHER.



AND HE WAS  
LIKE A FATHER TO  
ME! HELL, HE WAS  
THERE MORE FOR ME  
THAN HE WAS FOR HER!  
YOU DON'T SEE ME  
GOING FETAL  
OVER IT!

ARE YOU  
TEMPTED  
TO?

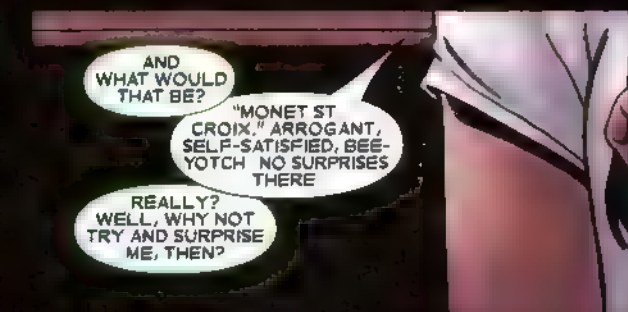
OF  
COURSE I  
AM! HE--



OKAY,  
WE'RE NOT  
GOING TO DO  
THIS NOW

NO  
BETTER  
TIME.

WHY BOTHER?  
JAMIE SAID IT WOULD  
"DO ME GOOD" TO TALK TO  
YOU, BUT I'M NOT SEEING  
IT. BESIDES, YOU'VE  
ALREADY FORMED YOUR  
OPINION OF ME



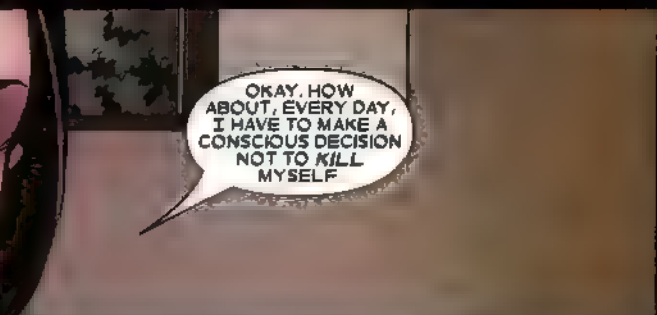
AND  
WHAT WOULD  
THAT BE?

"MONET ST  
CROIX," ARROGANT,  
SELF-SATISFIED, BEE-  
YOTCH NO SURPRISES  
THERE

REALLY?  
WELL, WHY NOT  
TRY AND SURPRISE  
ME, THEN?



OKAY. HOW  
ABOUT, EVERY DAY,  
I HAVE TO MAKE A  
CONSCIOUS DECISION  
NOT TO KILL  
MYSELF







SURPRISED?

SOMEWHAT

YAY.  
I WIN.

IS IT  
TRUE?

MONET?  
IS IT TRUE?

YOU'RE  
THE SHRINK.  
YOU TELL ME:  
WHERE DOES SUICIDE  
RANK IN CAUSE OF  
DEATH FOR PEOPLE  
MY AGE?

THIRD, BEHIND  
AUTO ACCIDENTS  
AND HOMICIDES.

SO YOU  
SHOULDN'T  
BE STARTLED,  
THEN.

BUT  
IN YOUR  
CASE

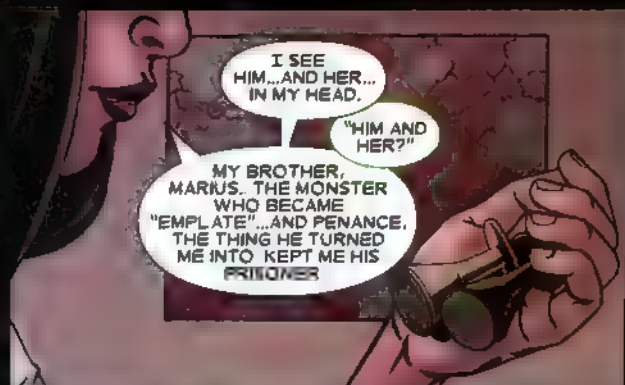


MY  
"CASE."  
LORD...

GIRLS MY AGE  
KILL THEMSELVES  
BECAUSE THEY DON'T  
KNOW WHO THEY ARE.  
GENDER CONFUSION.  
PRESSURE TO BE SKINNY  
AND PRETTY. TO BE  
POPULAR TO BE  
WHATEVER.

I  
DON'T.

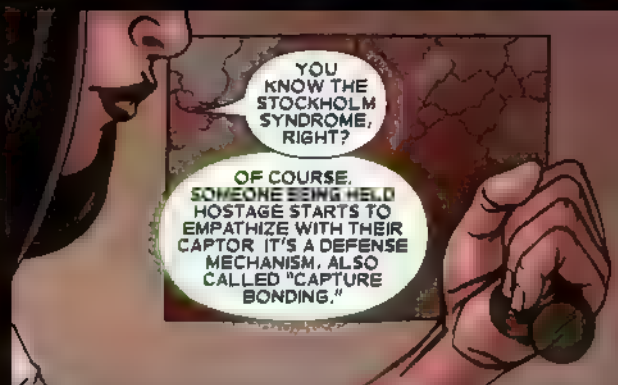
YOU  
DON'T.?



I SEE  
HIM...AND HER...  
IN MY HEAD.

"HIM AND  
HER?"


MY BROTHER,  
MARKUS. THE MONSTER  
WHO BECAME  
"EMPLATE"...AND PENANCE,  
THE THING HE TURNED  
ME INTO. KEPT ME HIS  
PRISONER



YOU  
KNOW THE  
STOCKHOLM  
SYNDROME,  
RIGHT?

OF COURSE.  
SOMEONE BEING HELD  
HOSTAGE STARTS TO  
EMPATHIZE WITH THEIR  
CAPTOR. IT'S A DEFENSE  
MECHANISM. ALSO  
CALLED "CAPTURE  
BONDING."





YEAH, WELL, HARD TO FEEL MUCH BONDING

...WHEN YOUR CAPTOR SUCKS DOWN YOUR BONE MARROW TO SURVIVE.

THE NIGHTS ARE THE WORST

I CAN SEE HIM IN THE SHADOWS, COMING FOR ME...

I SEE MYSELF TURNING BACK INTO PENANCE... TRAPPED IN THAT BODY, SCREAMING IN MY HEAD AND NO ONE CAN HEAR ME

I KNOW WHAT THE OTHERS SAY ABOUT ME. THINK ABOUT ME.

BUT I HAVE TO BE THIS WAY. STRONG, OVERWHELMING, BETTER THAN EVERYBODY...

I HAVE TO BE THIS "M" PERSON, BECAUSE I DRAW MY STRENGTH FROM HER.

IF NOT FOR HER, THEN THE FORCES INSIDE ME THEY'D CRUSH ME. THEY

CRIPES NOT TOO SYMBOLIC. SORRY. I'LL REPLACE THEM

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

TELL ME, MONET... IS LIFE REALLY THAT... BLEAK? DOES NOTHING MAKE YOU HAPPY?

WELL... UH... PROMISE YOU WON'T TELL ANYONE?

OF COURSE

OKAY, WELL... MADROX AND I... HOLY GOD, HE JUST TOTALLY SEDUCED ME ONE NIGHT, AND I TOTALLY LET HIM, AND SINCE THEN... WHOA UN-BE-LIEVABLE





Y'KNOW  
THE QUEENS ARE  
MISSING?

YES,  
I DO

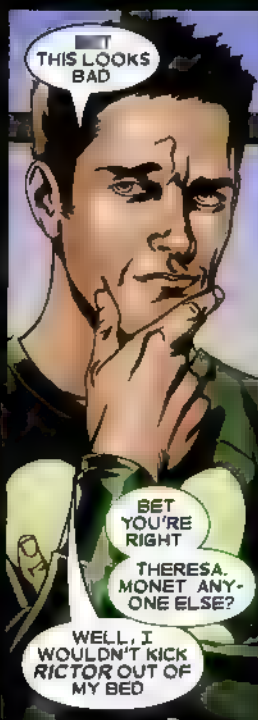
RAHNE'S  
COMING IN LATER.  
SHE'S BEEN TOUGH  
TO TALK TO SINCE  
SINGULARITY. SOME-  
THING'S GOING ON AND  
I CAN'T CONVINCE  
HER TO OPEN UP

REALLY,  
HAVE YOU  
CONSIDERED  
HAVING SEX  
WITH HER?



AM.  
YOU  
COULD SAY  
THAT

BUSTED,  
HUH?  
YOU  
COULD SAY  
THAT, TOO.

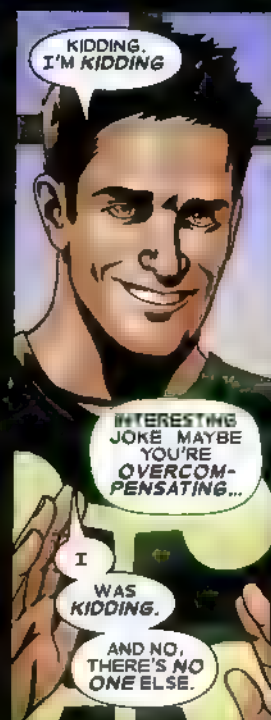


THIS LOOKS  
BAD

BET  
YOU'RE  
RIGHT

THERESA.  
MONET ANY-  
ONE ELSE?

WELL, I  
WOULDN'T KICK  
RICKTOR OUT OF  
MY BED

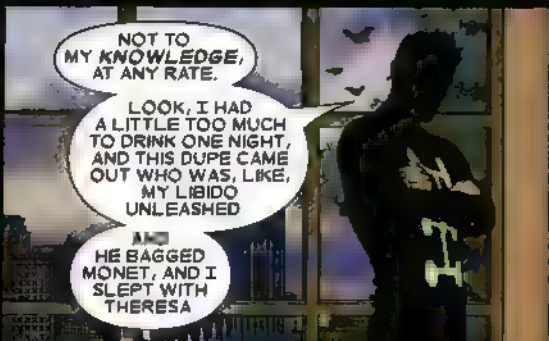


KIDDING.  
I'M KIDDING

INTERESTING  
JOKE. MAYBE  
YOU'RE  
OVERCOM-  
PENSATING...

I  
WAS  
KIDDING.

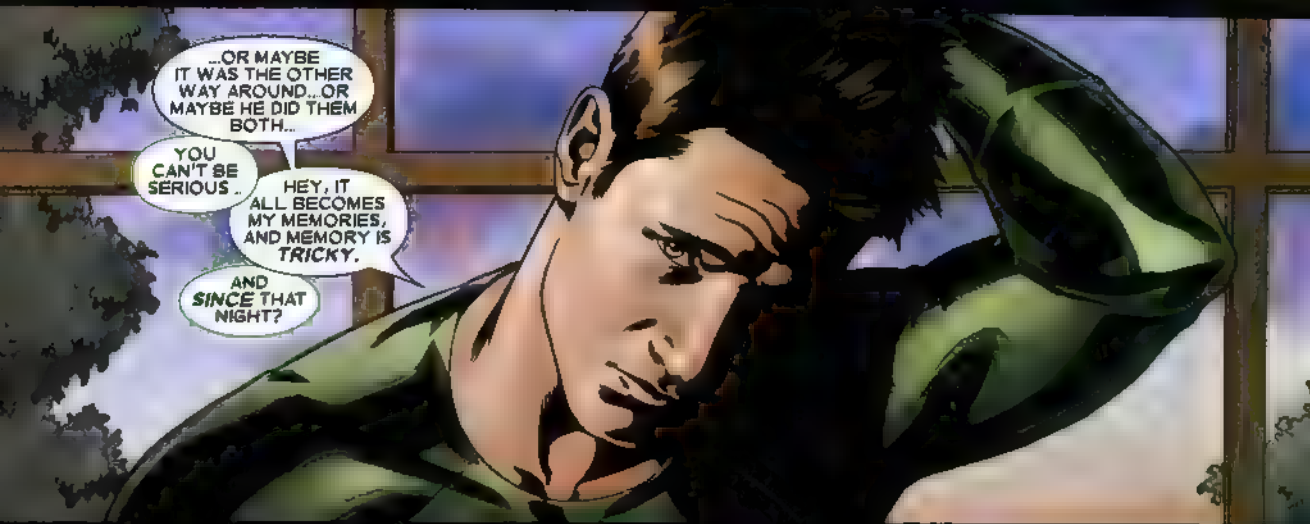
AND NO,  
THERE'S NO  
ONE ELSE.



NOT TO  
MY KNOWLEDGE,  
AT ANY RATE.

LOOK, I HAD  
A LITTLE TOO MUCH  
TO DRINK ONE NIGHT,  
AND THIS DUPE CAME  
OUT WHO WAS, LIKE,  
MY LIBIDO  
UNLEASHED

AND  
HE BAGGED  
MONET, AND I  
SLEPT WITH  
THERESA



...OR MAYBE  
IT WAS THE OTHER  
WAY AROUND...OR  
MAYBE HE DID THEM  
BOTH...

YOU  
CAN'T BE  
SERIOUS.

HEY, IT  
ALL BECOMES  
MY MEMORIES,  
AND MEMORY IS  
TRICKY.

AND  
SINCE THAT  
NIGHT?





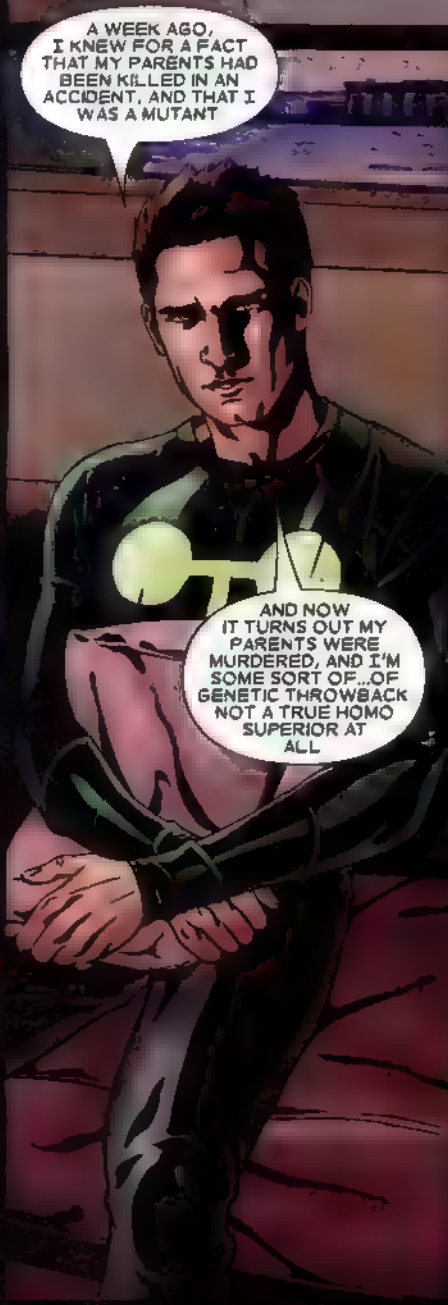
IT'S JUST BEEN  
ME

I THINK.

OH, FOR  
HEAVEN'S  
SAKE

LOOK,  
CUT ME SOME  
SLACK, WOULD'JA  
PLEASE!

MY WHOLE  
FLIPPING LIFE HAS  
BEEN TURNED ON ITS  
EAR! IT'S, LIKE, EVERY-  
THING I CAN DO TO  
KEEP MY HEAD ON  
STRAIGHT!



A WEEK AGO,  
I KNEW FOR A FACT  
THAT MY PARENTS HAD  
BEEN KILLED IN AN  
ACCIDENT, AND THAT I  
WAS A MUTANT

AND NOW  
IT TURNS OUT MY  
PARENTS WERE  
MURDERED, AND I'M  
SOME SORT OF...OF  
GENETIC THROWBACK  
NOT A TRUE HOMO  
SUPERIOR AT  
ALL



AND FROM  
WHOM DID YOU  
LEARN THIS?

PERHAPS  
THEY LIED THEY  
ARE BAD GUYS,  
AFTER ALL

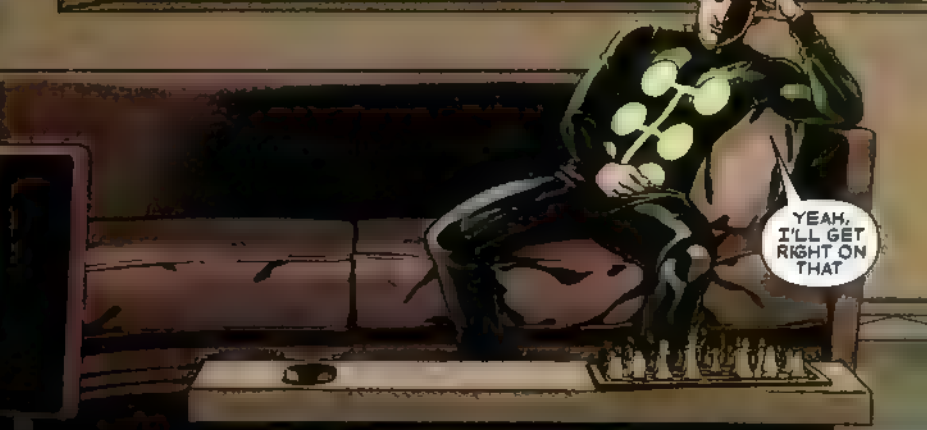
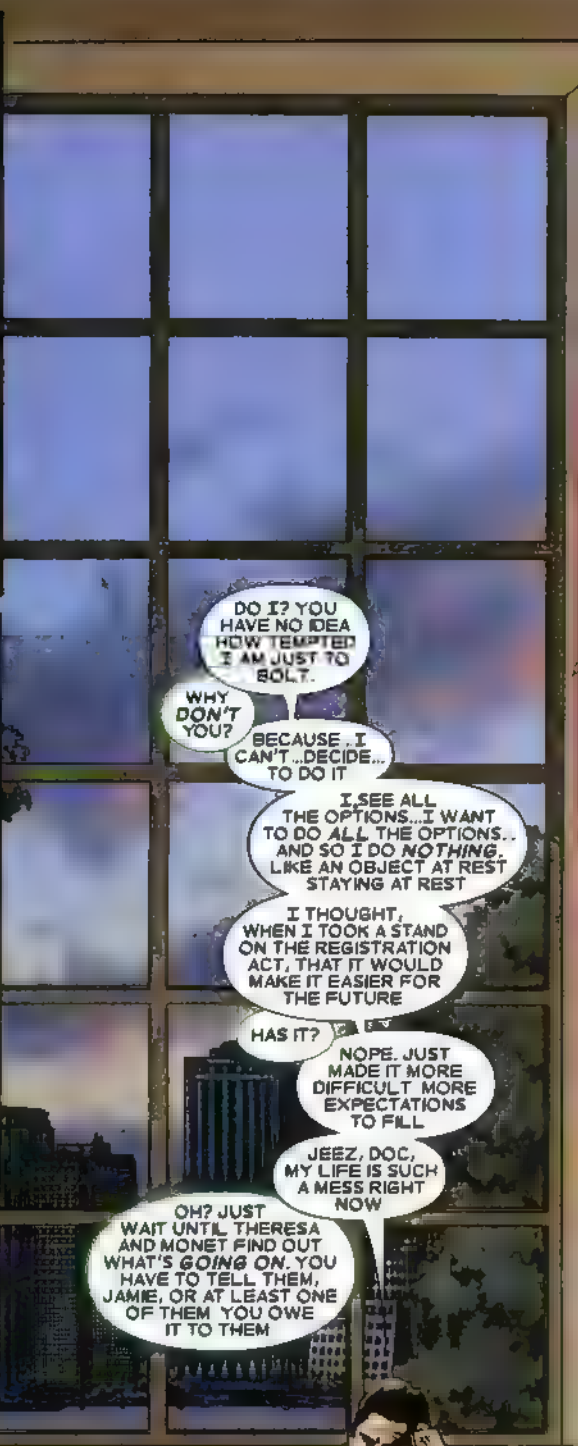
A DEAD DUPE,  
WHO FOUND OUT  
FROM THE BAD  
GUYS



ACTUALLY,  
IT'S BEEN MY  
EXPERIENCE THAT  
THE BAD GUYS ARE  
TOO INSUFFERABLY  
PLEASED WITH  
THEMSELVES  
TO LIE.

IT'S THE  
GOOD GUYS  
YOU HAVE TO  
WATCH OUT  
FOR









YOU WANT  
TO TELL ME  
ABOUT IT,  
RAHNE?

RAHNE?

YE DINNA  
WANNA HEAR  
IT.


YES,  
I DIN... UHM,  
DO

YE DON'T  
DESERVE THIS  
BURDEN.


WHY?

BECAUSE  
YE CANNA WARN  
ANYONE AND BECAUSE  
YE'LL KNOW WHAT I  
AM, BUT YE CANNA  
DO ANYTHING  
ABOUT IT.

AND  
WHAT ARE  
YOU?



I DON'T  
KNOW. I DON'T  
KNOW IF I'M A GIRL  
WHO TURNS INTO  
A BEAST...



...OR A  
BEAST THAT  
TURNS INTO  
A GIRL.

ALL I  
DO KNOW  
IS THIS...



WHEN I'M A  
GIRL, I'M TORN BY  
DOUBTS. ISSUES LIKE  
LIKE FATHER FIGURES,  
AND WANTING TO BE  
LOVED, AND LOVING  
OTHERS...

THE  
THINGS WE  
DISCUSSED  
AGES GO

AYE  
BUT  
WHEN  
I'M...

THIS

RAHNE  
JAMIE SAID SOME-  
THING "HAPPENED"  
TO YOU, PLEASE  
TELL ME

I...

YES?

I WAS  
SHOWN THE  
FUTURE AND I KNOW  
WHAT YE THINK IT WAS  
A FAKE. EXCEPT I KNOW  
IT WASN'T EVERY  
SENSE SAYS IT  
WAS TRUE

ALL THE  
DOUBTS GO AWAY  
MY MIND IS CLEARER  
IN FULL ANIMAL FORM,  
IT'S POSITIVELY  
PURE

PART OF ME  
WANTS TO BE THAT  
WAY ALL THE TIME  
ALL THE TIME

AND WHAT  
WAS THIS "TRUE  
FUTURE?"

RAHNE?

"I WAS IN A BEDROOM.  
I KNOW IT WAS ME, I SAW  
MYSELF IN A MIRROR

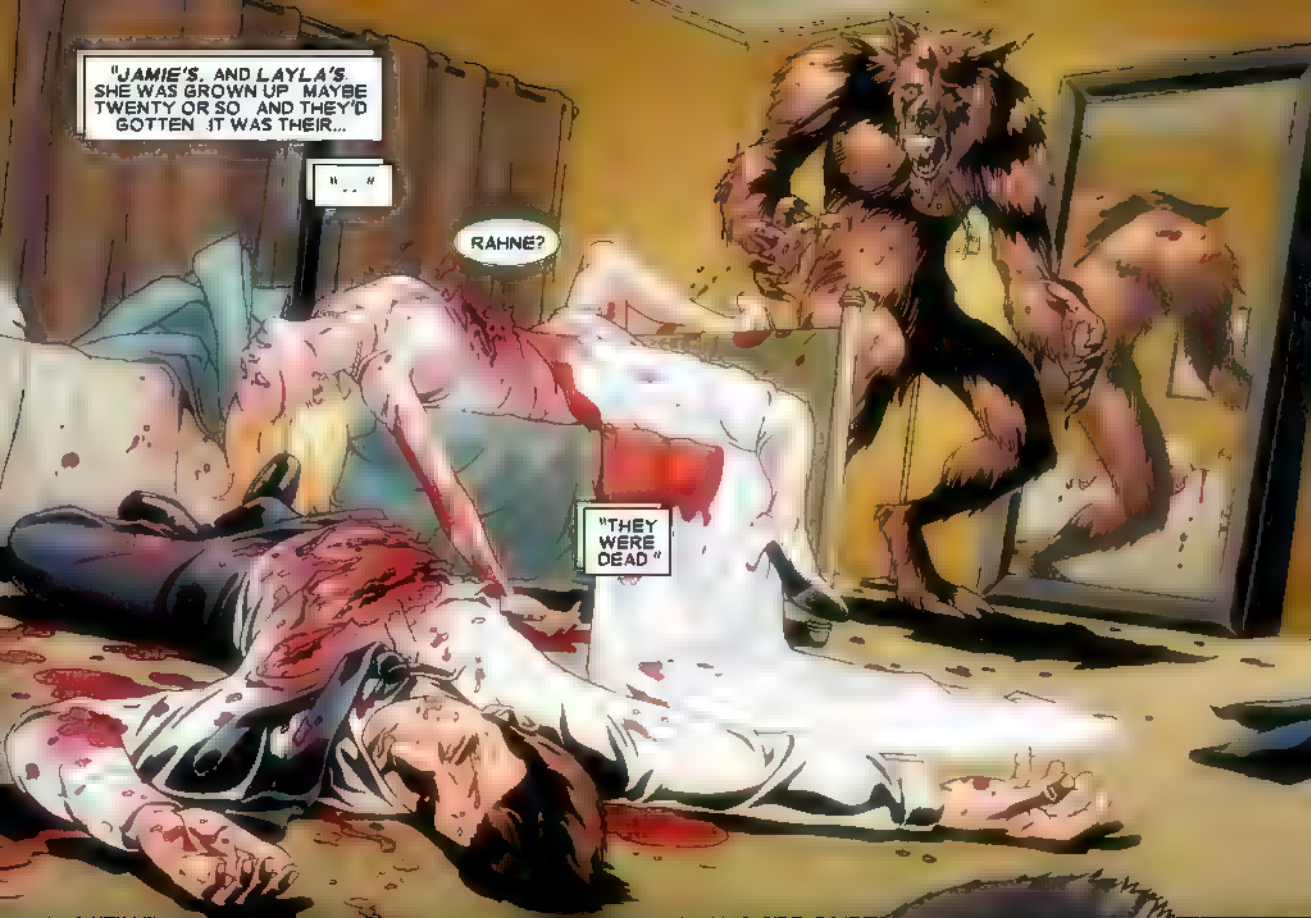
"I WAS COVERED  
WITH BLOOD"

YOURS?

"NO  
THEIRS"

WHOSE?









PLEASE  
HELP  
YOURSELF.

NO  
THANKS, I'M  
GOOD

AS YOU  
WISH.



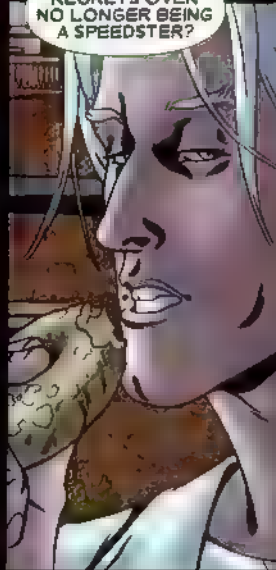
SO! WHAT  
BRINGS YOU TO  
MY HUMBLE  
CLINIC?

LET ME  
GUESS. YOU'VE  
BEEN CHATTING WITH  
THE FINE PEOPLE IN  
X-FACTOR AND DECIDED  
TO LOOK ME UP FOR  
OLD TIMES' SAKE

THAT'S  
PRETTY MUCH  
IT.

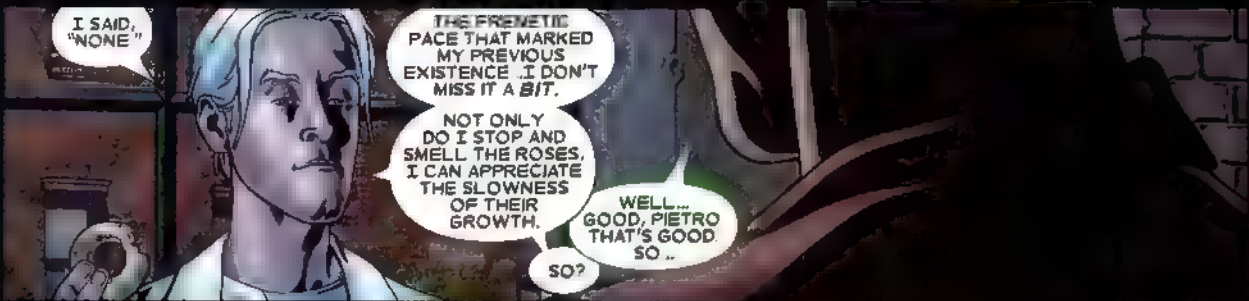
I HAVE TO  
ADMIT, EVERY TIME  
I GET STUCK BEHIND  
SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T  
KNOW HOW TO USE  
AN ATM, I THINK  
OF YOU

ANY  
REGRETS OVER  
NO LONGER BEING  
A SPEEDSTER?



NUM

PARDON?



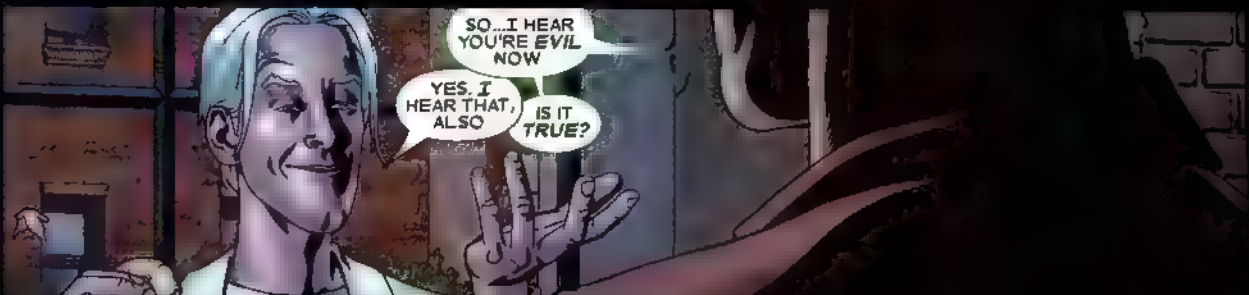
I SAID,  
"NONE"

THE FRENETIC  
PACE THAT MARKED  
MY PREVIOUS  
EXISTENCE. I DON'T  
MISS IT A BIT.

NOT ONLY  
DO I STOP AND  
SMELL THE ROSES.  
I CAN APPRECIATE  
THE SLOWNESS  
OF THEIR  
GROWTH.

WELL...  
GOOD, PIETRO  
THAT'S GOOD  
SO ..

SO?



SO... I HEAR  
YOU'RE EVIL  
NOW

YES, I  
HEAR THAT,  
ALSO

IS IT  
TRUE?



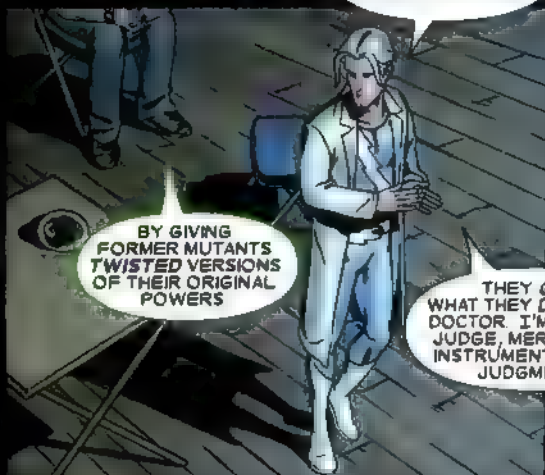


OF COURSE NOT.

DID I INADVERTENTLY CAUSE A SITUATION TO OCCUR THAT MANY WOULD TERM EVIL? YES

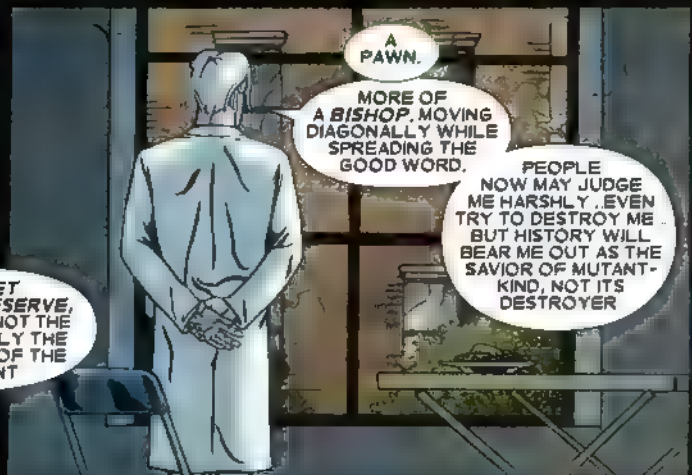
BUT I WAS MOTIVATED BY LOVE, AND WHAT GREATER GOOD IS THERE?

AND NOW I DELIBERATELY DO MORE GOOD IN ORDER TO EXPIATE MY INADVERTENT SIN



BY GIVING FORMER MUTANTS TWISTED VERSIONS OF THEIR ORIGINAL POWERS

THEY GET WHAT THEY DESERVE, DOCTOR. I'M NOT THE JUDGE, MERELY THE INSTRUMENT OF THE JUDGMENT



A PAWN.

MORE OF A BISHOP, MOVING DIAGONALLY WHILE SPREADING THE GOOD WORD.

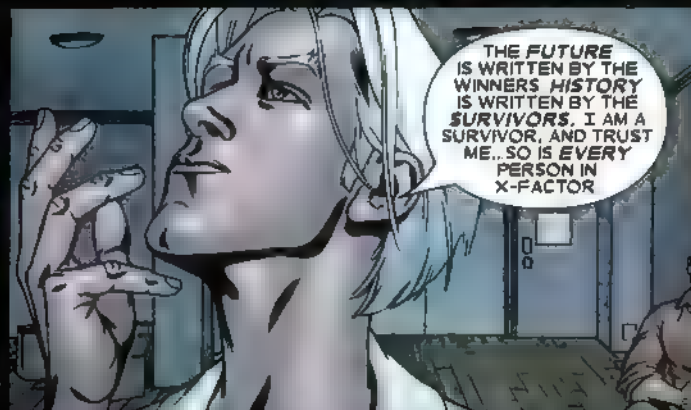
PEOPLE NOW MAY JUDGE ME HARSHLY, EVEN TRY TO DESTROY ME. BUT HISTORY WILL BEAR ME OUT AS THE SAVIOR OF MUTANT-KIND, NOT ITS DESTROYER



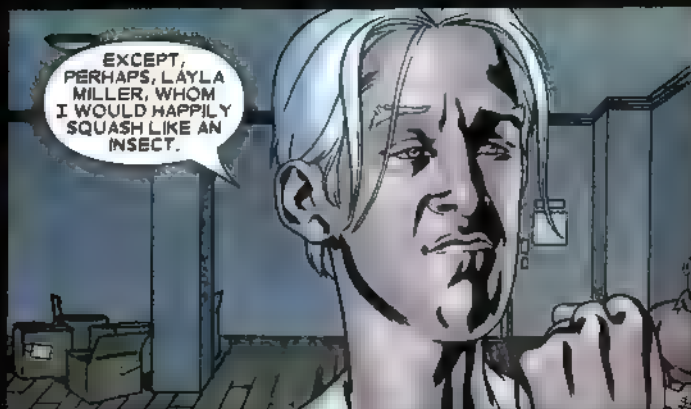
ARE YOU CERTAIN ABOUT THAT? AFTER ALL, THEY SAY HISTORY IS WRITTEN BY THE WINNERS

THEY'RE WRONG.

OH?



THE FUTURE IS WRITTEN BY THE WINNERS. HISTORY IS WRITTEN BY THE SURVIVORS. I AM A SURVIVOR, AND TRUST ME... SO IS EVERY PERSON IN X-FACTOR



EXCEPT, PERHAPS, LAYLA MILLER, WHOM I WOULD HAPPILY SQUASH LIKE AN INSECT.



YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT A PASTRY?





"YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT A PASTRY." AN IMPRESSIVE DISCONNECT FROM HIS PREVIOUS STATEMENT.

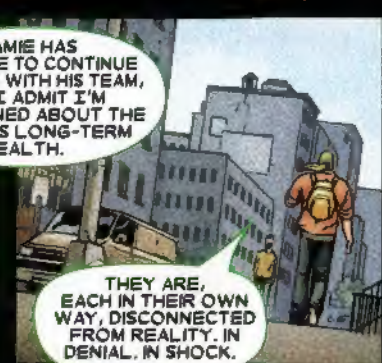


MY FURTHER DISCUSSIONS WITH PIETRO MAXIMOFF INDICATED WHAT I COULD ONLY TERM AS A MESSIANIC COMPLEX. IT BEARS FURTHER STUDY.

EVERYONE IN X-FACTOR DOES.



JAMIE HAS ASKED ME TO CONTINUE WORKING WITH HIS TEAM, BUT I ADMIT I'M CONCERNED ABOUT THE GROUP'S LONG-TERM HEALTH.



THEY ARE, EACH IN THEIR OWN WAY, DISCONNECTED FROM REALITY. IN DENIAL. IN SHOCK.



IN TROUBLE.

THEIR FUTURE IS MURKY AT BEST. THEY...

HEH. "CAUSE SHE WAS A WOMAN."

THAT'S TERRIBLE.

I HAVE TO TELL JEN THAT.



ANYWAY, AS I WAS SAYING...

THERE ARE TOO MANY UNKNOWN, TOO MANY--X-FACTORS, IF YOU WILL--THAT MAKE IT DIFFICULT FOR ME TO PREDICT WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN--







# X-FACTOR

Welcome, my friends, to the lettercol that never ends. Peter David here, on behalf of Andy Schmidt—the Schmidternator, as we call him—welcoming Pablo “Picasso” Raimondi. Yes, we’re together again for the first time: The creative team that gave you MADROX, the limited series that garnered more “What a great book, why the hell isn’t it selling more!?” reviews than any other title in Marvel history, has reunited for a new run of greatness. This issue is intended to be a good jumping-on point, so if you’re a newbie, welcome. If you’re a long-standing fan, shove it into the hands of the uninitiated and urge them to come on board for the ride. Letters, as always, may be edited for length but not content.

Dear X-Central,

I would like to congratulate you on a wonderful cast of characters in X-FACTOR! I love the title and the writing and really love the new artist Renato Ariem. Please keep him around. I know as a second-rate “X”-book this title will always get second-rate writers, artist, inkers, and colorists. The sad thing is if you ever placed a first-rate team on this title you would have incredible sales as well as a number #1 title.

Rafael Soto  
(Via E-Mail)

Well, Rafael, I think I speak on behalf of every second-rate creator on this book when I say...thanks...I guess...

Dear X-Factor Cronies,

Love your noir-ishness and other X-goodness that goes into making X-FACTOR a very interesting, funny and enlightening book. However, I have a bone to pick with you and it is to do with the scene setting of 1347 South Wales.

Mr. David, you seem to have my fellow countrymen confused with another populace of the British Isles in that we Taff’s never, ever say “Aye”. For any reason. Whatsoever. It’s nice to have nasty bad guys with little moral fortitude come from my homeland, and the proliferation of Wales is in general a very positive thing. But to confuse Wales with Scotland is just plain old nasty. We’ve got the Rugby World Cup coming in 2007, for God’s sake! You trying to hex us? They wear blue, we wear red! ARGH!

John Meredith  
Pontypridd, Wales

Well, John, while I do a considerable bit of research for each issue, little things are sometimes going to slip through. Then again, that’s what happens when you have a second-rate writer on the book, alas.

Dear X-Central,

I have recently gotten into the new X-FACTOR comics. I was wondering if it would be possible to see an appearance by Havok and Lorna in the near future. Maybe in a case or something of the sort. I have a few more questions. Would it be possible to have Madrox and Rahne at least

have a one-night stand? I think that it would be funny, if he did this before Monet and Terry find out about issue #11. Now for my final question. Is it possible to see Jamie and Guido joking around like in the good ol’ days?

Lance J. M.  
(Via E-Mail)

Well, as you can see, Lance, Jamie is already busy dealing with the (literal) fallout of his involvement with Siryn and Monet. Something tells me now wouldn’t be the time to try and get it on with Rahne...whom I think he really sees more as a sister-type anyway. As for Jamie and Guido joking around, well...maybe once the dust settles. And Havok and Lorna won’t be showing up anytime soon; tragically, they’re too busy appearing in first-rate X-books.

Dear X-Central,

Several points I wanna comment on. First, there was a letter, by Christopher Goodnight. He said, and I quote “You took a throwaway character and made her the star of a series,” talking of course about Layla Miller. Uh-hello? Don’t you have that a little backwards there, Chris? Layla Miller played a ginormous role in HOUSE OF M! Furthermore she plays significantly a lesser role here with X-Factor. Peter, you don’t think of Layla as a throwaway character, do you?

M is becoming a favorite character of mine recently, whereas I hated her in GENERATION X. Rictor, well...let me put it this way: X-FACTOR needs more A-list characters if it’s gonna work even in the current incarnation. Rictor has always been a secondary B-list character—and that was when he had powers! I hate his hair. Really I do. Remember when he had black hair and a mohawk? Ah, the good old days. And of course mohawks are back in the last few years, huh? Hmmm. I have to admit, Strong Guy killing that guy Buchanan—I really thought it was because of the phone call, so that was pretty predictable. Back to Rictor! As far as I’m concerned, Pietro can have him!! Maybe make an all-new team of his own or whatever. I’d much rather have Ric’s old buddy Shatterstar on this team! Not really too much of a fan of Shatterstar, but he doesn’t really have Earth (or star)-shattering powers, so he fits the criteria, right? Angel/Archangel, Moonstar and maybe Shatterstar are some of the more A-list characters I’d like to see in this series! I know there’s a new artist coming on after next month’s story-arc finale, and I thank you for that. But Pablo Raimondi?? What. Carlo Pagulayan was busy?? I know you wanna set a mood for the noir of this book (which I could frankly do without altogether) but that’s mainly done with the inking and coloring anyway. Isn’t it? This series deserves a better, more A-list artist!

Andrew J. Shaw  
(Via E-Mail)

Sorry, Andrew, but sadly enough, Rafael Soto has already made clear to us what a

bunch of second-rate creators are running the show. For consistency’s sake, one would almost have to require that we’ve got B-list characters to match our lack of status. Personally, I happen to think Pablo is as good as artists get, and I’m hoping this issue proves that.

As for Layla Miller, I have to admit, I’m bewildered over any negative fan reaction to her debut in HOUSE OF M. The knock on her seemed to be that the series wouldn’t have worked without her, and therefore her presence was somehow weak, forced, or a deus ex machina. Curiously, “Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest” hinged on the character Tia Dalma, the voodoo priestess, who was nowhere to be found in the first film. For that matter, Joss Whedon’s “Serenity” absolutely needed the character Mr. Universe in order to work, and he was nowhere in the previous thirteen episodes of “Firefly.” So I fail to understand why fans have singled out her introduction in HOM as somehow an indication of a weak story or contrived character. In any event, I’m glad you like what we’ve done with her. She’s developing quite a fan base. If this keeps up, she’ll be promoted to A-level and be removed from the book entirely, since we only have second-rate characters and creators around these parts.

Now if you’ll excuse me, I’m going to curl up in a corner and go fetal until the next lettercol, where we’ll no doubt have even more compliments that make me want to hit myself in the face with a baseball bat.

-PAD

## NEXT ISSUE:



## FIGHT NIGHT!

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